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What is claimed is:

1 1. A process for providing information regarding all available license deals represented by data  
2 entries in a data structure maintained by a usage measuring server, comprising the steps:  
3 1) receiving a log in message including user name and password;  
4 2) authenticating a customer's user name and password;  
5 3) if the user is authentic, sending messages to the user's computer causing it to  
6 display an interface page which includes one or more commands that can be invoked or links that  
7 can be followed, one of said commands or links being a request to shop all available deals on a  
8 resource;  
9 4) receiving a message from said customer that indicates said customer wishes to  
10 shop all available license deals and responding thereto by sending a message requesting the  
11 customer to identify the resource or resources she wishes to shop;  
12 5) receiving a message from said customer indicating which resource(s) she wishes  
13 to shop, and responding thereto by locating and accessing a data entry which represents the  
14 selected resource in a data structure of said server;  
15 6) following pointers in said data structure linking said resource to all provisioning  
16 item data entries in said data structure which represent available licenses for said resource and  
17 which record the terms thereof;  
18 7) reading the license term data from each provisioning item data entry so  
19 located, and sending said data to said customer in one or more messages.

1 2. The process of claim 1 wherein step 4 comprises transmitting data to said customer's  
2 computer to cause it to display a list of all available resources which can be licensed with a request to  
3 pick one or more to shop.

1 3. The process of claim 1 wherein step 4 comprises transmitting data to said customer's  
2 computer which causes it to display one or more templates each of which said customer can fill in to  
3 provide information that can be used to identify a resource said customer wishes to shop.

1 4. The process of claim 1 further comprising the steps of:  
2 receiving a message from said customer which indicates which license said customer  
3 has selected; and

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4 setting up an authorization node data entry in said data structure which points to the  
5 provisioning item corresponding to the license selected and which is coupled to a data entry  
6 representing the customer who accepted said license.

1 5. The process of claim 4 further comprising the steps of following pointers in said  
2 provisioning item to all resource data entries licensed under said license and setting up a resource  
3 authorization node in said data structure for each said resource licensed under said license and  
4 setting up an associated resource authorization node and usage data buffer for each said resource  
5 authorization node.

1 6. A process for providing information regarding all available license deals represented by  
2 data entries in a data structure maintained by a usage measuring server, comprising the steps:  
3 1) receiving a log in message including user name and password;  
4 2) authenticating a customer's user name and password;  
5 3) if the user is authentic, sending messages to the user's computer causing it to  
6 display an interface page which includes one or more commands that can be invoked or links that  
7 can be followed, one of said commands or links being a request to shop all available deals on a  
8 resource;  
9 4) receiving a message from said customer that indicates said customer wishes to  
10 shop all available license deals, and responding thereto by transmitting data to said customer's  
11 computer to cause it to display a query requesting information on the resource or resources for  
12 which the customer would like to shop for licenses;  
13 5) receiving a message from said customer indicating which resource(s) she wishes  
14 to shop;  
15 6) locating and accessing one or more data entries which represent the selected  
16 resource or resources in a data structure of said server which said customer indicated he would  
17 like to shop for licenses;  
18 7) following pointers in said data structure linking said resource to all provisioning  
19 item data entries in said data structure which represent available licenses for said resource and  
20 which record the terms thereof, and checking configuration data that sets security barriers that  
21 restrict which license deals said customer is allowed to access;  
22 8) reading the license term data from all the provisioning item data entry so located to  
23 which said customer is allowed access, and sending said license term data to said customer in  
24 one or more messages.

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1           7. The process of claim 6 wherein all messages exchanged between said customer's  
2 computer and said server are encrypted or sent by a secure protocol.

1           8. A process for providing information regarding all available locations for purchase of one or  
2 more resources of interest, said locations and resources being represented by data entries in a data  
3 structure maintained by a distribution system modelling server, comprising the steps:

4                   1) receiving a log in message including user name and password;  
5                   2) authenticating a customer's user name and password;  
6                   3) if the user is authentic, sending messages to the user's computer causing it to  
7 display an interface page which includes one or more commands or links that can be invoked, at  
8 least one of said commands or links representing a request to shop all available deals on one or  
9 more resources of interest;

10                  4) receiving a message from said customer that indicates said customer wishes to  
11 shop all available deals, and responding thereto by transmitting data to said customer's computer  
12 to cause it to display a page which requests information about the resource or resources to be  
13 shopped;

14                  5) receiving a message from said customer indicating which resource(s) she wishes  
15 to shop, and responding thereto by locating and accessing one or more data entries which  
16 represent the selected resource(s) in a data structure of said server;

17                  6) following pointers in said data structure linking said data entries representing  
18 resource(s) to be shopped to at least some of the provisioning item data entries in said data  
19 structure which represent available deals for said resource(s) at a particular location and which  
20 record information of interest to purchasers such as location or phone number of a location where  
21 the resource can be purchased, price, number on hand, upcoming promotions or existing  
22 promotions, etc.;

23                  7) reading the information of interest from each provisioning item data entry so  
24 located, and sending one or more messages to said customer containing at least some of said  
25 information of interest.

1           9. The process of claim 8 wherein step 6 comprises following pointers from said data entries  
2 representing said resource(s) to be shopped to all provisioning items representing locations where  
3 said resource can be purchased.

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10. The process of claim 8 wherein step 6 comprises following pointers from said data entries representing said resource(s) to be shopped to all provisioning items representing locations where said resource can be purchased, and then checking configuration data which controls which of said provisioning items to which said customer is allowed access and selecting only those provisioning items for reading of said information of interest in step 7.

11. A process for searching a data structure for data entries representing a resource which a customer is interested in buying or licensing, comprising the steps of:

1) receiving a log in communication containing information identifying a user including a password and authenticating said user;

2) if said user is authenticated, sending a message to said user which will cause it to display a link or command which may be invoked to start a search;

3) receiving a request to search and responding thereto by sending a message to said customer's computer which will cause it to display at least a search template which the customer can fill in with data defining search criteria;

4) receiving a message containing search criteria from a customer and using said search criteria to search data entries containing descriptions of resources available for sale or license;

5) if one or more resource data entries are found that satisfy said search criteria, following pointers from said one or more resource data entries to other data entries representing provisioning items and/or vendors, distributors, subdistributors and/or retail outlets where said one or more resources can be bought or licensed and which have available inventory for sale or license and which store information of interest to prospective buyers or licensees such as price, location, license terms, number on hand, etc.; and

6) applying any additional screening criteria designated by said customer, if any, and reading at least some of said information of interest to prospective buyers or licensees from the remaining data entries and sending said information to said customer.

12. The process of claim 11 wherein step 6 includes screening based upon distance from said customer if said customer has specified a maximum distance she is willing to travel to buy or license said resource.

13. The process of claim 11 wherein step 6 comprises reading from every resource data entry found in step 5 at least price and location or identity data identifying where a resource can be bought

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3 or licensed and sending said price and location data to said customer.

1 14. The process of claim 11 wherein step 5 comprises following pointers from said one or  
2 more resource data entries that satisfy said search criteria to all secondary data entries representing  
3 provisioning items and/or vendors, distributors, subdistributors and/or retail outlets where said  
4 resource(s) may be purchased or licensed and checking configuration data which controls which of  
5 these secondary data entries can be accessed by said customer, and wherein step 6 additionally  
6 comprises applying any additional screening criteria only to the secondary data entries to which said  
7 customer is allowed to have access and reading at least some of said information of interest only  
8 from said secondary data entries to which said customer is allowed to have access.

1 15. A server apparatus programmed with programs for controlling said server apparatus to:  
2 1) receive a log in message including user name and password;  
3 2) authenticate a customer's user name and password;  
4 3) if the user is authentic, send messages to the user's computer causing it to display  
5 an interface page which includes one or more commands that can be invoked or links that can be  
6 followed, one of said commands or links being a request to shop all available deals on a  
7 resource;  
8 4) receive a message from said customer that indicates said customer wishes to  
9 shop all available license deals and responding thereto by sending a message requesting the  
10 customer to identify the resource or resources she wishes to shop;  
11 5) receive a message from said customer indicating which resource(s) she wishes to  
12 shop, and responding thereto by locating and accessing a data entry which represents the  
13 selected resource in a data structure of said server;  
14 6) follow pointers in said data structure linking said resource to all provisioning item  
15 data entries in said data structure which represent available licenses for said resource and which  
16 record the terms thereof;  
17 7) read the license term data from each provisioning item data entry so located, and  
18 sending said data to said customer in one or more messages.

1 16. A server apparatus programmed with programs for controlling said server apparatus to:  
2 1) receive a log in communication containing information identifying a user including  
3 a password and authenticating said user;  
4 2) if said user is authenticated, send a message to said user which will cause it to

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5 display a link or command which may be invoked to start a search;

6 3) receive a request to search and responding thereto by sending a message to said  
7 customer's computer which will cause it to display at least a search template which the customer  
8 can fill in with data defining search criteria;

9 4) receive a message containing search criteria from a customer and using said  
10 search criteria to search data entries containing descriptions of resources available for sale or  
11 license;

12 5) if one or more resource data entries are found that satisfy said search criteria,  
13 follow pointers from said one or more resource data entries to other data entries representing  
14 provisioning items and/or vendors, distributors, subdistributors and/or retail outlets where said  
15 one or more resources can be bought or licensed and which have available inventory for sale or  
16 license and which store information of interest to prospective buyers or licensees such as price,  
17 location, license terms, number on hand, etc.; and

18 6) apply any additional screening criteria designated by said customer, if any, and  
19 read at least some of said information of interest to prospective buyers or licensees from the  
20 remaining data entries and send said information to said customer.